

U.S.-Soviet war room seen as deterrent

William Colby, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has called for a treaty that would establish a joint "war room" staffed by American and Russian officers as means of preventing an accidental nuclear war.

"We have to improve our crisis communications," Colby said, adding that with the two superpowers deploying increasingly accurate missiles, a nuclear crisis "can take place in a matter of hours, and even shorter." We cannot be in a position where we are communicating with a bush telegraph, he said, in reference to the Moscow-to-Washington teleprinter link known as the Hot Line.

HE THINKS American and Russian officers working together in a so-called war room might have considerable potential to prevent hasty actions that might wipe out most of the world's population with incredible speed.

Colby, a private lawyer who headed the CIA from 1973 to 1976, made his remarks at a gathering organized by the nuclear freeze movement, which Colby says he supports.

"If we have to have a war with the Soviet Union, it would be better if we could do it without the use of nuclear weapons," he said. He contends that nuclear weapons are "unusable in any real sense" and that a nuclear war is "unwinnable."

ALTHOUGH HE SAID no sane American or Russian leader would use nuclear weapons in a first strike, "we have the problem of insane men getting ahold of them — that's why we have to reduce them."

He endorses President Reagan's

proposal for deep mutual cuts in nuclear warheads through a strategic arms reduction treaty, but adds that he does not favor unilateral American cuts.

The assumption that war can be forever deterred by the fear of mutual annihilation "is becoming more and more tenuous as a logical basis for living," Colby said.

IN ADDITION to improved crisis communications, Colby thinks the two superpowers should consider developing a "jointly manned device in space" that would be capable of shooting down missiles in flight, no matter what their origin, in case of a mistake on either side.

Colby, unlike some others, thinks the buildup of American and Russian arsenals is far more worrisome than the prospect that belligerent Third World countries might obtain a few nuclear weapons.

"There is a potential that one of these might go off, if it gets into the hands of a Khadafy," said Colby, referring to the Libyan leader. But he said that if a single nuclear bomb were used in a regional war, the world community would wake up and demand treaties to control the risk of nuclear war in the future.

"IT MAY TAKE one city to prove this, but it may be a net advantage to the world if it happens," he said.

His main worry is a nuclear clash of superpowers, and his suggestion for a central operations site where able and well-trained people could work together and keep in touch with their home headquarters seems to be one of the better ones made in recent months.